



Social Accountability International and SA8000

Overview of Social Accountability International

Social Accountability International (SAI) is a human rights organization founded in 1996 that seeks to improve workplaces and communities around the world by developing and implementing socially responsible standards. To fulfill its mission, SAI convenes all key sectors, including workers and trade unions, companies, government, non-governmental organizations, socially responsible investors and consumers, to operate consensus-based voluntary standards; accredits qualified organizations to verify compliance; and, promotes understanding and implementation of such standards worldwide. SAI systems feature certification of compliance at the facility level and support for companies seeking to implement our standards. SAI leverages the power of responsible consumers and investors by identifying companies and other organizations that adopt and implement our standards.

Overview of SA8000, the Global Workplace Standard

SAI's first social accountability system is **SA8000**, a tool for retailers, brand companies, suppliers and other organizations to assure just and decent working conditions in the supply chain. SA8000 is a leading workplace standard and verification system because it offers a unique combination of attributes that make it highly credible and efficient:

- ◆ **A standard that covers all widely-accepted international labor rights** (see below for details)
- ◆ **Independent, expert verification of compliance** – certification of facility compliance by independent, SAI-accredited auditing bodies. SAI accreditation ensures that auditors have the procedures, resources and expertise needed to conduct independent, comprehensive, consistent and in-depth audits.
- ◆ **Factory-level management system requirement to foster ongoing compliance and realize gains in productivity, quality and worker recruiting and retention.**
- ◆ **Involvement by all stakeholders** – participation by all key sectors - workers and trade unions, companies, socially responsible investors, nongovernmental organizations and government - in the SA8000 system including the Advisory Board, drafting and revision of the standard and auditing system, conferences, training, and the complaints system
- ◆ **Public reporting** – SA8000 certified facilities are posted on the SAI website. Companies that join the SA8000 Corporate Involvement Program - Level Two (see below for details) release annual SAI-verified annual progress.
- ◆ **Meeting consumer, investor and government concerns** – SA8000 Certification and Corporate Involvement Program help consumers, investors and government to identify and support companies assuring labor rights in the supply chain.

SA8000 Standard Elements

SA8000 is based on international workplace norms in the ILO conventions and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on Rights of the Child. The official standard is at www.sa-intl.org and here is a summary:

1. **Child Labor** – no workers under the age of 15; minimum lowered to 14 for countries operating under the ILO Convention 138 developing-country exception; remediation of any child found to be working
2. **Forced Labor** – no forced labor, including prison or debt bondage labor; no lodging of deposits or identity papers by employers or outside recruiters
3. **Health and Safety** – provide a safe and healthy work environment; take steps to prevent injuries; regular health and safety worker training; system to detect threats to health and safety; access to bathrooms and potable water
4. **Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining** – respect the right to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively; where law prohibits these freedoms, facilitate parallel means of association and bargaining
5. **Discrimination** – no discrimination based on race, caste, origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, union or political affiliation, or age; no sexual harassment
6. **Discipline** – no corporal punishment, mental or physical coercion or verbal abuse
7. **Working Hours** – comply with the applicable law but, in any event, no more than 48 hours per week with at least one day off for every seven day period; voluntary overtime paid at a premium rate and not to exceed 12 hours per week on a regular basis; overtime may be mandatory if part of a collective bargaining agreement
8. **Compensation** – wages paid for a standard work week must meet the legal and industry standards and be sufficient to meet the basic need of workers and their families; no disciplinary deductions
9. **Management Systems** – facilities seeking to gain and maintain certification must go beyond simple compliance to integrate the standard into their management systems and practices

SA8000 Implementation Options

1. **Certification:** Companies that operate production facilities can seek to have individual facilities certified to SA8000 through audits by one of the SAI-accredited certification auditing bodies. Since the SA8000 system became fully operational in 1998, **there are already certified facilities in 36 countries and across 35 industries.**
2. **Corporate Involvement Program:** Companies that focus on selling goods or that combine production and selling can join the SA8000 Corporate Involvement Program. The CIP is a two-level program that helps companies evaluate SA8000, implement the standard in the supply chain, and report publicly on implementation progress.

SA8000 Explorer (CIP Level One)

- Work with SAI to evaluate SA8000 as an ethical sourcing tool via pilot audits

SA8000 Signatory (CIP Level Two)

- Implement SA8000 over time in some or all of the supply chain by promoting and ultimately requiring SA8000 certification
- Communicate implementation progress via SAI-verified public reports

Program benefits include training courses for managers, suppliers and workers, technical assistance in implementing SA8000, online system for managing audits and identifying shared suppliers, and SAI-verified reports to communicate SA8000 implementation progress to stakeholders. The CIP was launched in late 1999 and has attracted entities representing more than \$100 billion in annual revenue including **Amana SA, Avon Products, Cutter & Buck, Dole Food, Eileen Fisher, Gap, Otto Versand, Synergies Worldwide, Tex Line, Timberland, Toys “R” Us, UNOPS, and Vögele Mode.**

Benefits of SA8000

Along with humane workplaces, the implementation of SA8000 offers more benefits to workers, companies and others:

Benefits for Workers, Trade Unions and NGOs

- Enhanced opportunities to organize trade unions and bargain collectively
- A tool to educate workers about core labor rights
- Another opportunity to work directly with business on labor rights issues
- Public awareness of companies committed to assuring humane working conditions

Benefits for Business

- Putting company values into action
- Enhancing company and brand reputation
- Improving employee recruitment, retention and performance
- Better supply chain management and performance

Benefits for Consumers & Investors

- Clear and credible assurance for ethical purchasing decisions
- Identification of products made ethically and companies committed to ethical sourcing
- Broad coverage of product categories and production geography

SAI Programs to Advance Social Accountability

Research and development: drafting and revising of social accountability standards, guidelines for the independent verification of compliance, examples of good practices and the costs and benefits of certification.

Accreditation: SAI licenses qualified auditors to certify workplace compliance with social accountability standards. SAI regularly audits the auditors. It does not audit factories or farms.

Improving auditing effectiveness: constant review of the auditing process; an open complaints and appeals system; regional roundtables to review auditing challenges and share best practices; fostering greater involvement by NGOs and trade unions.

Training and technical assistance: training of auditors, workers, managers and suppliers. SAI certifies individual auditors and helps companies in the implementation process by providing training and information.

Outreach and alliance building: working with trade unions, businesses, NGOs, governments and international agencies to improve SAI systems through pilot audits, regional workshops, conferences and corporate commitment programs. Harmonize SA8000 with other standards through mutual recognition and joint auditing.

**** For more information: visit www.sa-intl.org or contact us at 212-684-1414, fax 212-684-1515, or info@sa-intl.org ****